

Open Letter to Church Board

Date: September 24, 2013

To: Church Board
Sara Simons, Chairman
Katie Spencer, V. Chair
Don Whitley, Secretary
Dorene Drake, Treasurer
Barb Scantlin, Elder Chair
Pat Whitley, Deacons
Oaks Christian Church
1216 Bethlehem St
Houston, Texas 77018-1918

From: Charlie Dean, church member

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is difficult to ignore the obvious demographic hole in our membership and attendance. I will refer to this group of people (**ages 19 – 30**) as **Young Adults**. This problem did not happen in a vacuum. I was asked at the business meeting on September 15, 2013 to present my plan and ideas. I will do that.

Young Adults are not looking for a church where entrenched older members are hiding material, causing information to disappear, dictating to members how they may or may not share nonexempt information, and the like.

Please think back to the August 11, 2013 business meeting, when the subject turned to low membership problems. **I pointed out that our music repels more people than it attracts, and that this is especially so for younger people.** Bob spoke about newer generation music (or words to that effect). I said it does not matter if the music is new or old; what matters is the beat and the entrainment effect and whether it makes people want to two-step, waltz, or clap their hands. Sara said that changing the music would make no difference. There was discussion of how the Board had been toying with the idea of a committee to look into the music problem.

Don is the secretary and takes the minutes. When I later read the minutes of the 8/11/2013 meeting, I saw that I was mentioned as attending, however my statement about the music was missing. I remember months earlier when I tried to discuss the music problem with Don, he quickly said “that’s getting into gossip.” I realize that some people prefer not to discuss the music problem. **Conveniently making conversations about the music problem disappear into thin air is not the best way to address the music problem.** It is hard to imagine that at least some of the other officers and leaders did not tacitly go along with this. Young Adults are not looking for this kind of a church.

Although I was unable to email my two letters (Sept. 5 and Sept. 10, 2013) to all members of the Board, the Board should have had a procedure to assure that my material was timely exchanged. I do not care how this gets done, but I care when it fails to get done. Sadly, the

Board does not even timely exchange material amongst its own officers and leaders. Surely at least the meeting minutes could be exchanged several days in advance. Young Adults are not looking for this kind of a church.

There was no advance notice of the September 15, 2013 business meeting that I know of. This could have been done by email. There was no mention of it in the Sunday bulletin. Ten church leaders and officers, (Sara Simons, Don Whitley, Dorene Drake, Barb Scantlin, Pat Whitley, Larry Scruggs, Pat Scruggs, Jimmie Saldavar, Ruth Conover, and Bob Simons) failed to notice or chose to ignore it. Young adults are not looking for this kind of church.

Some officers and leaders were upset about my Sept. 10, 2013 letter as it mentioned the rummage sale of 9/6/2013 – 9/7/2013. They used rhetoric such as “working our tails off” and “things just get done.” This is indicative of the problem. Some things just did not get done. It is common knowledge that working in an organized manner leads to better results. Instead of devoting time to developing an SOP (standard operating procedure) for this, some officers and leaders expended time blowing off steam. It was disingenuous of one officer to have made a presentation over an hour earlier in the church service, surreptitiously rebutting part of the Sept. 10, 2013 letter. Young adults are not looking for this kind of a church. We must address problems directly.

As the discourse continued concerning a digital library, I listened to an assortment of excuses for maintaining the status quo; “why do we need ... why would anybody ... why should we ... nobody ever ... who would want ... we’ve never done that before ... why do we need ... we’ve never needed that ... we don’t want ...” Young adults are not looking for a church that is locked into such a limited way of thinking. We must be more forward-thinking. We should be concerned at the demographic hole in our membership, but we should not be surprised.

Time is going to pass any way, no matter what we do. We may as well use it to accomplish something. I urge each Board member and church leader to do a private cost-benefit analysis, and consider the cost of not accomplishing anything. We must do better if we expect Young Adults to come here and put up with us. I am not happy about what I have stated here, but it is needed.

As for my plan and ideas, I propose an auxiliary organization that will target Young Adults with emphasis on Information Technology. The auxiliary group will provide a workspace for OCC members who want to use their skills to support OCC. Members of the auxiliary organization will do what the Board does not have time or skills for. Members of the auxiliary group will handle, oversee or help with website matters, digitization projects, newsletters, weekly emails, and it will do research and provide other services, all with emphasis on targeting Young Adults. I will follow up on this in more detail.

Meanwhile, I encourage the Board to preserve, organize, and make easily accessible, the old electronic corporate files that are unaccounted for. Following is my recent correspondence with the church office.



Charlie Dean <charlie.dean81@gmail.com>

Accounting for digital corporate documents:

2 messages

Charlie Dean <charlie.dean81@gmail.com>
To: Oaks Christian Church - <oakscchouston@aol.com>

Sat, Sep 21, 2013 at 12:14 AM

Holly,

Do you think you could email this to everyone. There are probably a dozen or more years of digital corporate documents that are unaccounted for. Apparently it is not all possessed by the same person or persons. Some of it may be on hard drives, CDs, or other devices. This stuff belongs to OCC. It belongs to each member of OCC. Nobody, not even an officer, has a higher right to the digital material than anyone else.

Accounting for digital corporate documents:

This is an attempt to establish a standard, or a best practice, for preserving our digital material.

- • Preserve each document in its original form. E.g., if you created a Word document, your file name would end with ".doc" or ".docx" and this would be your original form.
- • If you converted the document to another format, e.g., PDF, then preserve that file too.
- • Converting your file into PDF assures that others can use it. This is prudent, because as software changes, some people do not have an application to read the old original file. E.g., some of my old AppleWorks files are no longer readable. Had I converted them to PDF, I would have a file I could read.
- • It would be nice if you would see that your material is printable on an 8.5 X 11 sheet of paper. Just because you can see it on your computer screen does not mean it will print in a reasonable fashion on an 8.5 X 11 sheet of paper.
- • Organize year, then month.
- • Use filenames that describe the content.
- • Back it up.
- • Share it with others whom you think might be interested in it.
- • Prepare an index, showing each filename, and a brief description.
- • Email this to the church office. Or you might exchange it via a thumb drive, etc.

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Mon, Sep 23, 2013 at 9:23 AM

Yes. I just forwarded this to the board.
[Quoted text hidden]